Royal Mail Group Ltd

Welsh Language Scheme

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Introduction

Royal Mail Group Ltd

This scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board under section 14(1) of the Welsh Language Act. It was approved on 16/12/2011.

1. The Royal Mail Group Ltd (formerly The Post Office) was made a public corporation by an Act of Parliament in 1969. For the purposes of this scheme Royal Mail Group Ltd means Royal Mail Letters, Post Office Ltd and Parcelforce Worldwide. It has a duty, under a Licence issued to it by Postcomm under the Postal Services Act 2000 to provide a universal postal service to serve the social, industrial and commercial needs of the United Kingdom. Royal Mail Group Ltd comprises of three distinct businesses within the UK and employs 168,000 staff.

Royal Mail, as defined, provides a letter and postal packet collection and delivery service for the United Kingdom, combining advanced technology with its transportation network to deliver c.59 million items daily to 28 million addresses. These figures include mail delivered daily to over 1.5 million addresses in Wales. Royal Mail offers a wide range of special services designed to cater for business and private mail users.

Parcelforce Worldwide operates in an extremely competitive Express parcels market and offers a parcel delivery service to every address in the United Kingdom directly or by agent.

Post Office Limited has a network of over 11,500 branches, which are visited by around 20 million customers each week. These figures include nearly 1,000 branches in Wales. Post Office Limited provides a range of products including, Financial, Insurance, Broadband and Phone, Letters and Parcels, Travel and Counter Services as well as providing an outlet for government departments, public bodies, utilities and commercial organisations.

Royal Mail Group Ltd operates currently within a fully liberalised mail market; it combines a long history of dedicated public service with a commitment to providing its customers with modern services geared to their needs. Royal Mail Group Ltd has operated a Welsh Language Scheme since 1997 and remains committed to the Welsh society, language and culture.

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About this Scheme

2.1 Royal Mail Group Ltd has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality. This scheme sets out how Royal Mail Group Ltd will give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales.

2.2 We will adhere to the policies and uphold the standards set out in this scheme, and plan all new services with reference to the commitments given in it. Implementing and monitoring this Scheme sets out our framework for managing and monitoring our progress in fulfilling our commitments.

2.3 Our starting point in recognising the equality of the Welsh and English languages is that customers in Wales, who prefer to transact their business with us in Welsh, whether in correspondence, by telephone or in person, are welcome to do so. We operate a large Welsh Language Call Centre in Bangor dedicated to providing services for customers wishing to transact their business in Welsh. We are committed to provide an equally high standard of service in Welsh and English. The Royal Mail codes of practice and Parcelforce Worldwide service guide are available in Welsh from all Crown Post Offices in Wales and from our customer service centres.

2.4 The commitments in this scheme require us to maintain our capacity for routinely handling business in Welsh to the required standards, and this scheme includes the steps we will take to achieve this.

2.5 This scheme has the full support of the Royal Mail Group Ltd Board and covers Post Office Limited, Royal Mail Letters and Parcelforce Worldwide. In this scheme, "we" and "our" refer to Royal Mail Group Ltd, formerly The Post Office of the United Kingdom, as established by the relevant Acts of Parliament.

Addresses and postmarks in Wales

3.1 Provided that the correct address and postcode are used, we will deliver to our normal service standards letters and parcels which bear either the Welsh or English name for a locality or thoroughfare in Wales officially adopted and displayed by the local authority. However, we discourage the use of bilingual addressing as this can impact on the quality of service provided. Whether the Welsh or English address is used, we would respectfully remind customers that the full postal address including the postcode should be always provided by the sender. Omission of the correct postcode or use of a form of address not adopted and displayed by the local authority, will impact on the quality of service received. Official addresses for thoroughfares are decided by local authorities, rather than by Royal Mail and it is the responsibility of local authorities to notify us of any changes to official forms of address as stipulated in our Code of Practice. We will liaise with local authorities in Wales to verify the names of thoroughfares which are displayed bilingually.

3.2 To make it easy for customers to find and use the correct Welsh form of addresses in Wales our Postal Address File (PAF) allows convenient identification of official Welsh addresses via the Toolbar-options, language choice facility.

3.3 Official postmarks applied to Royal Mail posted items either by mechanised or manual processes at our Mail Centres in Wales indicates the name of that office. They will normally show the office name bilingually, except in cases where the length of the name makes this technically impracticable because of constraints of space. The date of posting will normally be shown in numerical form.

3.4 Handstamps used to apply official postmarks at Post Office Limited branches will show only the registered listed name of the branch due to space restrictions.

3.5 Postmark slogans or messages applied as part of the cancellation mark will have bilingual wording where that wording is supplied by Royal Mail Group Ltd rather than a third party. However, because of technical constraints of space, bilingual slogans in Wales may be abbreviated versions of those applied throughout the rest of the United Kingdom in English only. The size, quality, legibility and prominence of the wording of postmarks in Wales will respect the principle of equality between Welsh and English. If a customer pays for an advertising slogan or message, we will offer them the option of using bilingual or solely Welsh wording in Wales. Similarly, holders of response service licences in Wales are welcome, within the clear zone spaces provided, to show information bilingually or solely in Welsh or English on Business Reply or Freepost envelopes. This excludes addressee details and is subject to compliance with our regulations for design.

3.6 Where meter dies in postal franking machines show the name of a town ("town dies"), we will approve Welsh versions for use in Wales wherever it is practicable to do so. Constraints of space make it impracticable to show both Welsh and English versions of town names together. We welcome suppliers of franking machines who wish to offer the Welsh version to customers in Wales. Suppliers of franking machines in Wales are welcome to invite customers to use bilingual meter slogans.

3.7 "First Day of Issue" postmarks generated by Royal Mail that are used to cancel first day covers and philatelic mail in Wales will be bilingual, subject to size and technical constraints. We will offer customers in Wales who pay for their own design of special philatelic handstamp, the option of bilingual wording.

3.8 Business customers in Wales availing themselves of the Royal Mail Business redirection services will be allowed to use both their English and Welsh equivalent company identity without additional charge. However, we stipulate that the English and Welsh business names must be a direct translation as any variations will be charged as normal terms and conditions dictate. Social customers with different surnames will be charged for each variation of a surname.

3.9 Individual or sheets of Welsh Definitive stamps will be available at all Post Office branches in Wales along with the current "Special Stamp" issues available at the time.

Correspondence

4.1 Our offices in Wales will use bilingual headed official stationery for all correspondence with our customers in Wales. We will also use bilingual headed official stationery for services regularly provided to our customers in Wales from offices outside the Principality. Official stationery includes letterheads, compliment slips, fax headers and business cards. All printed headings showing information, titles or that conveys any message will appear in bilingual form on these items.

4.2 We will reply in Welsh to all correspondence received in Welsh.

4.3 We will use Welsh in any correspondence which arises from a meeting or telephone conversation with a customer using Welsh.

4.4 We will use Welsh in personal correspondence we initiate with any customer in Wales who we are aware has previously indicated a preference for corresponding in Welsh. We will initiate correspondence bilingually if we have no indication of the customer's preferred language, but any further correspondence will be either in Welsh, in English, or bilingual, according to the choice expressed by the customer.

4.5 Any circulars or standard letters we address to all properties or business customers in Wales about public postal services will be bilingual, regardless of the place of posting. The same principle applies to any receipts supplied at Post Office branches to customers in Wales.

4.6 Royal Mail has published standards for acknowledging and replying to all correspondence within a stated time. These are set out in the code of practice published by Royal Mail available at all main Post Office branches and from our Customer Services team. The same standards that our businesses set for responding to letters in English will apply to letters in Welsh.

4.7 We will issue guidelines for translators and use competent translators to prepare letters in Welsh via our Welsh Language Centre. We shall maintain internal monitoring to ensure that the speed and quality of our correspondence in Welsh meets high standards. We will ensure that we only use qualified translators or interpreters for the translation of electronic and printed material – and for simultaneous translation. The translators will be members of the Association of Welsh Translators or a similar organisation.

4.8 We will provide appropriate Welsh language awareness training and stipulate guidelines for employees in correct procedures, setting out the standards that are required when dealing with correspondence in Welsh.

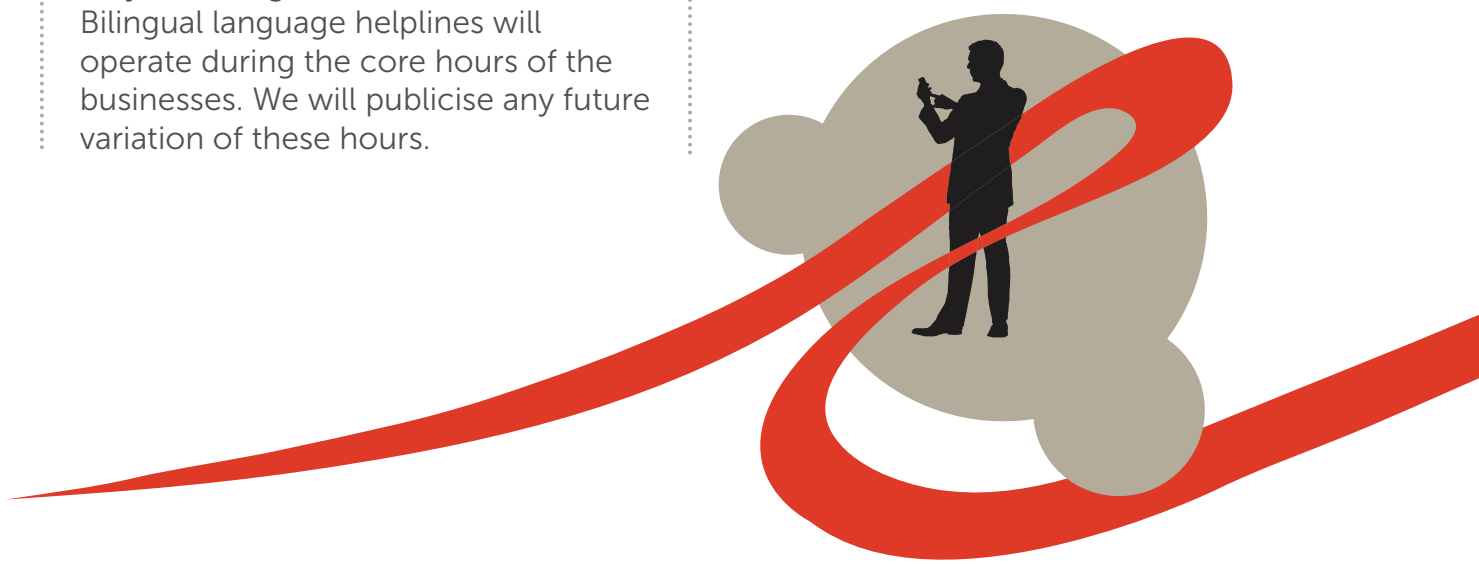
Telephone calls

5.1 Our core businesses will provide either bilingual or dedicated Welsh language telephone helpline services via our Welsh Language Contact Centre. To make Welsh-speaking customers aware that the facility is available, we will publicise bilingually the numbers of the helplines provided by or on behalf of our businesses. Advertisements in telephone directories showing these contact numbers will be fully bilingual in Wales.

5.2 Calls to the Welsh language telephone helplines will be charged at the same rates as the equivalent English language helplines for the Royal Mail Group Ltd service in question. Hours of availability of telephone helplines may vary between the Royal Mail Group businesses and may be changed from time to time. Bilingual language helplines will operate during the core hours of the businesses. We will publicise any future variation of these hours.

5.3 Customers ringing our other helpline numbers who indicate that they wish to speak in Welsh will be transferred to a Welsh-speaking helpline at no additional charge where the transfer facility is available. Alternatively we will provide the number of the Welsh language helpline for the customer to call at their convenience. If appropriate, we will invite the customer to write to us in Welsh or arrange for a Welsh speaker to ring the customer back.

5.4 Staff who are unable to speak Welsh will be given instruction and training in the procedures for referring callers who wish to use Welsh to a Welsh language helpline.



Face to face meetings

6.1 We will aim to increase wherever possible the number of people at our offices competent to transact business in Welsh, giving priority to those areas where there is greatest demand from the local Welsh-speaking community. We will monitor our annual progress in this area.

6.2 We aim to use name badges to identify Post Office counter positions where service is available in Welsh. Where no Welsh speaker is available at one of our offices or enquiry offices in Wales we shall, as a minimum, offer to provide any customer who prefers to transact business in Welsh with details of the Welsh language telephone helpline service. The helpline will offer to provide the address of the nearest office where Welsh is spoken. If appropriate, we will arrange for a Welsh-speaking member of staff to contact the customer as soon as practicable.

6.3 We will maintain databases of Welsh-speaking employees and agents who are competent and willing to transact business with customers in Welsh, and make best use of our resources in this respect for the benefit of our Welsh-speaking customers. Bilingual badges will be worn by employees and agents in Post Office branches in Wales identifying agents able to conduct business through the medium of Welsh.

6.4 We will ensure awareness is provided for staff in Wales who have contact with the public in procedures for dealing correctly with enquiries from customers who prefer to transact their business in Welsh. We will set standards for this training programme and monitor progress against them.

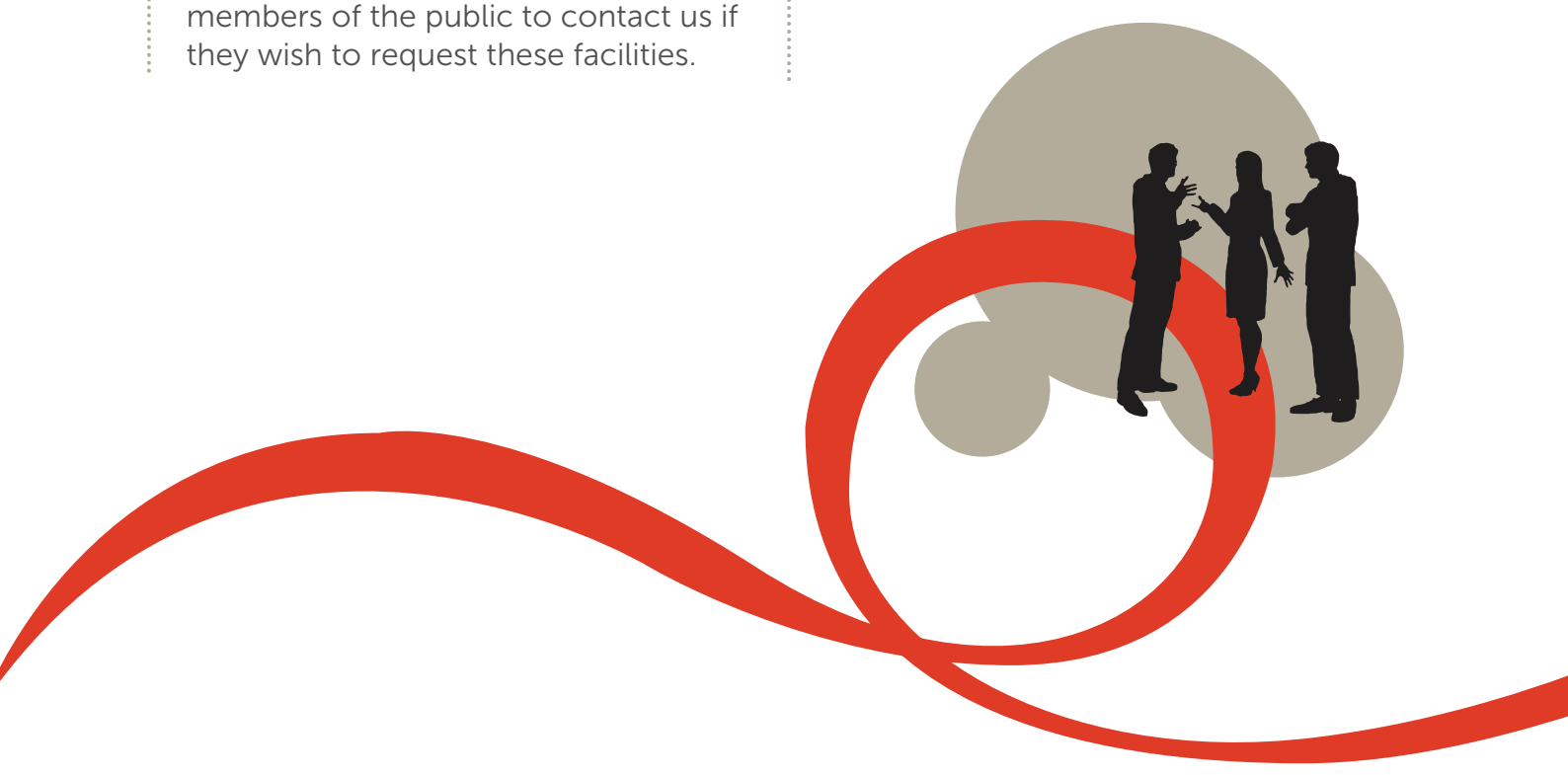
6.5 Information about our scheme and our commitment will be provided to all staff employed within Wales.

Public meetings

7.1 We shall offer to have a competent Welsh speaker present at any meeting we arrange in Wales which is open to members of the public. If someone attending the meeting notifies us in advance that they wish to speak Welsh we will also consider the provision of full translation facilities, having regard to the level of demand, location and subject of the meeting. Our advance publicity for such meetings will invite members of the public to contact us if they wish to request these facilities.

7.2 We will offer to include a Welsh speaker amongst our representatives when we attend a public meeting in Wales arranged by others.

7.3 Where possible we will offer to arrange for a Welsh speaker to be present for guided visits to our premises in Wales by members of the public, or for meetings arranged on our premises in Wales.



Forms and leaflets

8.1 In Wales we will produce bilingual or Welsh versions of Royal Mail Group Ltd leaflets and all forms which we produce for members of the public to complete. Some international documents dealing with Customs have to be completed in English only, to comply with regulations made by the Universal Postal Union.

8.2 Post Office Limited, at Post Office branches supply forms and leaflets on behalf of several client organisations that may not yet produce their literature in Welsh. We will, however, use our influence as an agent to encourage the introduction of bilingual forms and leaflets wherever possible.

8.3 To ensure that our customers in Wales have no difficulty in obtaining bilingual forms and leaflets, we shall maintain procedures which seek to ensure that our offices there are adequately stocked and that the items are adequately displayed subject to space constraints. Where separate Welsh versions are available, we will ensure that they are made equally available with the English version. We will arrange for any leaflet which is in print but temporarily unavailable at a Post Office branch (or at a Royal Mail caller's office or Parcelforce Worldwide depot) to be posted free of charge to the customer within one working day of receiving the request.

Signs, identity and notices

9.1 All posting boxes used by the public in Wales will display bilingual information, as will all stamp vending machines and ATMs we own and operate.

9.2 Our delivery and Mobile Post Offices vehicles permanently based in or mainly used in Wales will display the bilingual signs of identity adopted by the Royal Mail Group Ltd business in question.

9.3 We will display bilingual public information signs and the bilingual signs of identity adopted by the Royal Mail Group Ltd business in question on the exterior of our buildings in Wales. Where Post Office branches in Wales which we own and operate still display external signs in English only, we shall phase in bilingual signs. Where Post Office branches in Wales are operated by agents on our behalf, we will ensure the adoption of bilingual fascia in the course of the normal replacement or re-painting cycle.

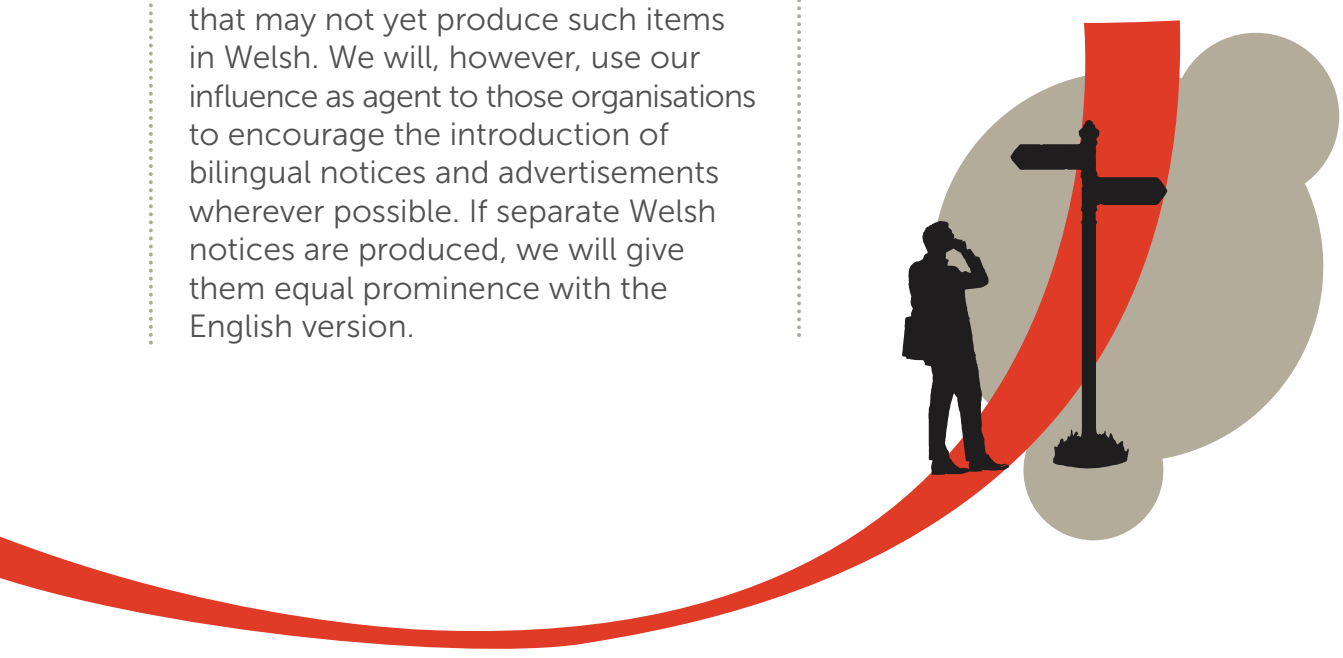
9.4 We will display bilingual internal signs where they are intended for the information of customers in those areas of our premises in Wales where the public are normally admitted. All Post Office branches in Wales will display bilingual signs, unless constraints of space make this genuinely impracticable. The principle of equality between Welsh and English will also apply to any new or replacement electronic signs including customer screen interface equipment and digital voice announcements which we install in Post Office branches in Wales.

9.5 The English and Welsh lettering on all our bilingual signs will be equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence. Where we provide separate Welsh and English signs, they will be equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence.

9.6 The same principle of equality in design in respect of size, quality, legibility and prominence will apply to all our publications, materials or notices produced in Welsh. Where a place-name occurs within Welsh text, the official Welsh form will be used. These bilingual requirements for Wales will be incorporated in our design guidelines.

9.7 Public information notices produced by the Post Office Limited and displayed in public areas in Post Office branches in Wales will be bilingual. Our Post Office branches also display notices and advertisements on behalf of several client organisations that may not yet produce such items in Welsh. We will, however, use our influence as agent to those organisations to encourage the introduction of bilingual notices and advertisements wherever possible. If separate Welsh notices are produced, we will give them equal prominence with the English version.

9.8 Philatelic items with a specifically Welsh theme will be produced bilingually. The use of Welsh will be considered in the design of other philatelic items on sale in Wales whenever it is reasonably practicable to do so. The design of the set of Welsh definitive postage stamps produced for sale in Wales will respect the principle of equality between Welsh and English.



The Internet

10.1 In offering services to the public on the Internet, we will have regard to the Welsh language. We provide a Welsh version of our Royal Mail Group website. Our Royal Mail website provides Welsh content which includes the Postal address look-up and Track and Trace facilities. Post Office Limited aim to develop the content of it's website with the provision of a Welsh language page within 12 months. Further content will be considered for our websites where demand necessitates it in consultation with the Welsh Language Board. News releases will be displayed in Welsh and English on our Group website.

10.2 When designing new websites, or redeveloping our existing websites, we will take into account the Welsh Language Board's Bilingual Software Guidelines and Standards and any other guidance issued by the Board with regard to developing websites.

Press notices, publications and exhibitions

11.1 Press notices and releases about changes to our services in Wales, or which have special relevance to Wales or the Welsh language will be produced bilingually. We will issue Welsh and English versions simultaneously unless particular urgency requires issue before translation is complete. In such cases, a Welsh version will be issued as soon as possible after the English version. When we address such press notices and releases to media in Wales, this may include newspapers published elsewhere but with the majority of their circulation in Wales.

11.2 We will normally produce bilingually public information publications distributed to customers in Wales. However, we may continue to produce in English only some items which have a low circulation in Wales, such as technical or specialised manuals, guides, operating instructions or similar items not intended for the general public.

11.3 Where we produce separate Welsh and English versions of a publication we will aim to publish both versions simultaneously and they will be available in Wales on terms of equal accessibility. If we make a charge for any publication which is issued in a bilingual format, the price will not be greater than that of a single language version of that document. Nor will the price of a separate Welsh version of any document be greater than the price of the English version.

11.4 Any exhibition which we mount in Wales will have bilingual displays. We will also mount bilingual displays for any contribution we make to any other exhibition organised in Wales.

Product advertising

12.1 Any advertising promotions we produce aimed solely at Welsh customers will be bilingual, or have a Welsh language version.

12.2 Any postal customer survey questionnaires relating to our services in Wales will be produced bilingually, and will provide for responses in Welsh.

12.3 Where we produce advertising material aimed at promoting sales rather than providing public information, we shall consider in each case the need for production of a bilingual or Welsh language version for Wales, having regard to the size and nature of the target audience, and commercial considerations.

12.4 Where we sell or distribute promotional or other products, either separately or in connection with another of our services, we shall consider in each case the need for production of a bilingual or Welsh language version for Wales, having regard to the size and nature of the target audience, but with a presumption in favour of the principle of equality between Welsh and English. Where others contract with us for the distribution or sale of items they produce in joint promotions with one of our services, we shall similarly ask them to take these considerations into account.

Recruitment and training

13.1 In Wales, we will advertise job vacancies in both Welsh and English. However, where we consider that the ability to speak or write Welsh is an essential requirement of the job, we may advertise in Welsh only, with a footnote in English explaining the purpose of the advertisement.

13.2 We will identify those jobs for which we consider that the ability to speak Welsh is essential or desirable. Where such a requirement applies it will be stated in our job advertisement and incorporated in the job description.

13.3 We are an equal opportunities employer and will select the person most competent to fill a vacancy, taking all factors into consideration. Where we have stated that the ability to speak Welsh competently is desirable for a particular job, and where in our view candidates are otherwise equally qualified, we will give preference to a Welsh speaker.

13.4 We will monitor the recruitment, placing and level of proficiency of Welsh speaking staff, with a view to increasing wherever possible the number of Welsh speakers serving the public in Wales. However, no employee will be assigned or transferred to a duty for reasons of linguistic competence without their agreement.

13.5 For jobs where we consider that it is essential or desirable to use Welsh, we will encourage and support appropriate language training to ensure that the holder can reach and maintain the standard we require within a stated period. The support we provide for employees, e.g. day release, periods of study leave for examinations and costs of tuition and study aids, will be on the terms that normally apply within the Royal Mail Group businesses for study of approved subjects.

13.6 Each business aims to produce and circulate a Welsh language awareness brief for the information of its employees.

Arrangements with Third Parties

14.1 We will encourage suppliers or contractors and their employees who provide services to the public in Wales on our behalf to abide by our standards for the use of Welsh as set out in this scheme. We will ensure that all invites for tenders for provision of such services in Wales are made aware of our Welsh language commitments.

14.2 Where we are acting as an agent for another organisation which has its own Welsh language scheme and we provide services to the public on its behalf, we will honour our contractual obligations.

14.3 In Wales, vacancies for agents operating post offices on our behalf will be advertised bilingually. Our overriding commitment is to the maintenance of a nation-wide network of Post Office branches, and appointments will be made against that background. We will encourage agents operating Post Office branches on our behalf to employ Welsh speaking staff at their branches to the extent which they are able to do so.

14.4 Where appropriate we will permit customers who purchase services supplied by third parties from Post Office branches who do not have a Welsh language helpline of their own to use our facility.

Implementing and monitoring this Scheme

15.1 Observance of this scheme is mandatory within all parts of Royal Mail Group Ltd, and managers have a responsibility to see that it is communicated and implemented. The scheme will be publicised internally to maintain awareness. All appropriate new staff and agents will be made aware of the scheme as part of their induction training.

15.2 The planning of all Royal Mail Group Ltd products and services for the public will take account of the need in Wales for equality between the Welsh and English languages and the commitments given in this scheme. New policies and initiatives must be consistent with the scheme, and must not undermine it.

15.3 Each Royal Mail Group Ltd business shall have processes to ensure that the measures and standards set out in this scheme are implemented, maintained and adequately and consistently monitored, and that Welsh language requirements are given proper consideration. The commitments given in this scheme must be incorporated in appropriate business guidelines and instructions and communicated to all relevant staff, and to contractors providing services to the public on behalf of Royall Mail Group Ltd. Agents should also be asked to communicate them to their staff.

15.4 Each business shall name a senior person with overall responsibility for Welsh language policy. The name of the person will be made known, as appropriate, to other staff and to any agent or contractors employed by the business, as well as to the public. For Royal Mail Group Ltd as a whole, compliance with this scheme shall be the responsibility of the Secretary to Royal Mail Group Ltd.

15.5 We shall keep the effectiveness of this scheme under review, and we shall consider any necessary amendments to this scheme for further promoting equality between the Welsh and English languages in consultation with the Welsh Language Board. Should we fail to meet our published standards and targets, we shall give an explanation to the Board and describe the measures being taken to put matters right.

15.6 We shall consult the Welsh Language Board in advance regarding proposals which will affect the scheme, or will affect the schemes of other organisations.

15.7 We shall not make any alteration to this scheme without the agreement of the Welsh Language Board.

15.8 Each business will monitor the number and nature of enquiries, suggestions and complaints it receives about the Welsh language service and policy. The results will be included in the published annual report on performance against scheme commitments.

15.9 We will conduct periodic opinion surveys to test the views of Welsh-speaking service users about the range and quality of services in Welsh which we provide. Oral surveys will be carried out in the preferred language of the respondent, and questionnaires will be produced bilingually.

15.10 We will promote continuing awareness of our Welsh Language Scheme by sustaining a programme of ongoing publicity about it.

15.11 We will ensure that we only use qualified translators or interpreters for translation of electronic and printed material – and for simultaneous translation. Those translators will be members of the Association of Welsh Translators or a similar organisation.

15.12 We will send monitoring reports to the Welsh Language Board, annually in June, outlining progress in delivering this scheme, based on our records.

Contact points

16.1 If you have an enquiry or complaint about a particular Royal Mail Group service, you should first take it up with the customer service centre for your area. You will find the address and telephone number in your local telephone book. You will also find details of how to complain, and our standards for dealing with complaints, in our codes of practice which are available free at main post offices. We welcome suggestions for improvement.

16.2 If you have a query or complaint concerning our Welsh language policy and the contents of this scheme, please contact:

Mike Norman
External Relations
3rd Floor
Royal Mail Cardiff
220 Penarth Road
CARDIFF
CF11 8TA

E-mail: mike.norman@royalmail.com

Section	Action	Responsibility	Target
3.0	**Addresses and Postmarks:** Promote the Welsh language function on PAF products via customer Newsletters.	Mike Norman	Ongoing
4.8	Provide guidelines for employees within Customer Services setting out the required standards for correspondence in Welsh	Group	Ongoing
5.1	Parcelworldwide to produce bilingual advert to advertise Helplines in publications	PWW	Ongoing
6.3	Maintain a database of Welsh speaking employees and agents who can transact business through the medium of Welsh	Group	Ongoing
6.4	Provide language awareness for staff in Wales who have contact with the public for dealing correctly with enquiries in Welsh	Group	Ongoing
6.5	Provide information about the scheme to all staff in Wales	Group	2012
8.3	Ensure that offices in Wales are adequately stocked with bilingual forms and leaflets	POL	Ongoing
9.3	ParcelWorldwide to update signage at depots under normal replacement cycle in line with commitment.	PWW	Ongoing
9.3	Ensure that all Royal Mail Group Ltd internal and external signs that are intended for the information of customers in Wales are bilingual in the course of normal replacement cycles	Group	Ongoing
10.0	Internet: Provide Welsh language page for the Post Office Limited website.	POL	2012
12.3	Consider the need for production of a bilingual or Welsh language version for advertising material on a case by case basis	Group	Ongoing
13.2	Identify jobs where the ability to speak Welsh is essential or desirable	Group	Ongoing
13.6	Each business to produce and circulate a Welsh language awareness brief	Group	Ongoing

Section	Action	Responsibility	Target
15.0	**Scheme Awareness:** Promote scheme internally to raise awareness of our Welsh language commitments via publications/ intranet to all staff.	Mike Norman	Ongoing
15.0	Promotion of Welsh Language Services: Actively promote current services available to customers via marketing and publicity campaigns.	Mike Norman	Ongoing
15.0	**Monitoring the service:** Measure usage and demand of services offered via reporting schedule in the following areas: • Telephone calls • Web activity • Service application requests	Mike Norman	Ongoing
15.0	**Monitoring:** Provide the WLB with an annual monitoring report as prescribed by the Board.	Mike Norman	June 2012
15.1	Include Welsh language awareness training for appropriate new staff as part of induction training	Group	Ongoing
15.10	Conduct opinion survey to test the views of Welsh-speaking users about the range and quality of services provided in Welsh	Group	Ongoing
15.11	Place Welsh Language Scheme in a prominent place on the Royal Mail website	Group	2012
15.4	Each business to name a senior person with overall responsibility for Welsh language policy.	Group	2012

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